AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1. - 24. (Canceled).

25. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

identifying a Multi-Link Trunk (MLT) in which data is to be transmitted;

identifying a plurality of ports included in the MLT;

generating an identification for the data to be transmitted, the identification based on a data packet's source address and destination address, and wherein the identification is pseudo-random for different source-dest pairs and same for same source-dest pairs; and

using the identification to determine a physical port in which the data is to be transmitted in the MLT.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein generating the identification further comprises:

generating the identification using a random generator.

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 25, further comprising:

selecting a portion of at least a source address and [[/or]] a destination address of the data on which Exclusive - OR (XOR) operation is performed to generate the identification.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25, wherein using the identification to determine a physical port further comprises:

determining a number of ports in the MLT;

using the number of ports as a base for a modulus (MOD) function;

performing the MOD functions on the identification; and

using a result of the MOD function as an index to select one of the ports in said MLT.

29. (Currently Amended) A processor readable medium which when executed by a processor causes the processor to perform a method comprising:

identifying a Multi-Link Trunk (MLT) in which data is to be transmitted;

identifying a plurality of ports included in the MLT;

generating an identification for the data to be transmitted, the identification based on a data packet's source address and destination address, and wherein the identification is pseudo-random for different source-dest pairs and same for same source-dest pairs; and

using the identification to determine a physical port in which the data is to be transmitted in the MLT.

30. (Original) A processor readable medium as in claim 29, wherein generating the identification further comprises:

generating the identification using a random generator.

31. (Currently Amended) The processor readable medium of claim 29, further comprising:

selecting a portion of at least a source address and **[[**/or**]]** a destination address of the data on which Exclusive-OR (XOR) function is performed to generate the identification.

32. (Currently Amended) The processor readable medium of claim 29, wherein using the identification to determine a physical port further comprises:

determining a number of ports in the MLT;

using the number of ports as a base for a modulus (MOD) function;

performing the MOD function on the identification; and

using a result of the MOD function as an index to select one of the ports in the MLT.

33. - 48. (Canceled).

49. (Previously Presented) A method comprising:

identifying a plurality of ports available in a plurality of interface cards in a device; and

selecting a grouping of ports of the plurality of ports as a Multi-Link Trunk (MLT), at least one port of the grouping of ports is located in an interface card separate from another port of the grouping of ports which is located in another interface card, and wherein the grouping of ports includes two of the plurality of ports, and selecting the grouping of ports further comprises selecting the ports that are secure.

50. (Previously Presented) An apparatus comprising:

a first circuit to identify a plurality of ports available in a plurality of interface cards in a device;

a second circuit to select a grouping of ports of the plurality of ports as a Multi-Link Trunk (MLT), at least one port of the grouping of ports is located in an interface card separate from another port of the grouping of ports which is located in another interface card; and

a third circuit to determine if a port included in an MLT has failed;

a fourth circuit to select another port from the identified plurality of ports; and

a fifth circuit to replace the failed port with the selected port.

51. (Previously Presented) An apparatus comprising:

a first circuit to identify a plurality of ports available in a plurality of interface cards in a device;

a second circuit to select a grouping of ports of the plurality of ports as a Multi-Link Trunk (MLT), at least one port of the grouping of ports is located in an interface card separate from another port of the grouping of ports which is located in another interface card; and

a third circuit to select the grouping of ports that are secure.

52. (Previously Presented) A processor readable medium which when executed by a processor causes the processor to perform a method comprising:

identifying a plurality of ports available in a plurality of interface cards in a device;

selecting a grouping of ports of the plurality of ports as a Multi-Link Trunk (MLT), at least one port of the grouping of ports is located in an interface card separate from another port of the grouping of ports which is located in another interface card;

determining if a port included in an MLT has failed;

selecting another port from the identified plurality of ports; and

replacing the failed port with the selected port.

53. (Previously Presented) A processor readable medium which when executed by a processor causes the processor to perform a method comprising:

identifying a plurality of ports available in a plurality of interface cards in a device; and

selecting a grouping of ports of the plurality of ports as a Multi-Link Trunk (MLT), at least one port of the grouping of ports is located in an interface card separate from another port of the grouping of ports which is located in another interface card, and wherein selecting the grouping of ports further comprises selecting the ports which are secure.